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Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

Participation of United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping operations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is prepared pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 54/245 A of 23 December 1999, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to undertake a study on the use of United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping operations. The report provides information on the use of United Nations Volunteers up to the present and on the possibilities for expanding their use in peacekeeping operations in the future.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 54/245 A of 23 December 1999 and the request of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on the financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (A/54/622), the Secretary-General has prepared the present study on the use of United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping operations. The Advisory Committee had expressed the view that opportunities for the use of United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping operations should be explored more intensively and that the volunteer service could be a potential source of immediate assistance if the mix of expertise could be expanded to include the sorts of staff required as gratis personnel, in accordance with the procedures established by the Assembly (ibid., para. 38).

II. Historical background

2. Collaboration between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in the peacekeeping arena dates back to the early 1990s. United Nations Volunteers first participated in United Nations field missions in early 1991 in the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia and in 1992 during the succession mission, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. During this time approximately 700 United Nations Volunteers were mobilized and deployed.

3. Subsequently, the Department has called upon the UNV programme to participate in 19 field operations, including the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Operation in Somalia, the United Nations Operation in Mozambique, the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa, the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, the United Nations Protection Force, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, the International Civilian Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti, the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission, the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, the United Nations Mission in East Timor, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and, most recently, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

4. In total, more than 3,000 United Nations Volunteers have served in the past decade in the above-mentioned field operations. United Nations Volunteers are systematically included in the formulation of staffing tables for field missions because of the flexibility they offer in terms of rapid deployment and range of occupational expertise. Currently, almost 900 United Nations Volunteers are serving in various functions in United Nations field missions. In the past year almost 2,000 Volunteers were mobilized to meet the increasing operational requirements dictated by new and expanding missions and to complement the missions' civilian staff component.

III. The United Nations Volunteers programme

5. The UNV programme was created by the General Assembly in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation at the request of United Nations Member States. It is administered under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and works through UNDP country offices around the world.

6. There are about 4,000 qualified and experienced women and men of more than 140 nationalities serving annually in developing countries as volunteer specialists and field workers. Since 1971, more than 20,000 United Nations Volunteers from some 150 developing and industrialized nations have worked in about 140 countries. Currently, 60 per cent are citizens of developing countries and 40 per cent come from the industrialized world. United Nations Volunteers have relevant academic qualifications (42 per cent at the postgraduate level) or a proven track record in community-based action in such areas as agriculture, health, education, community development, vocational training, industry, transport and population. All have working experience, usually some 10 years, and their average age is 37. Up to now approximately 28 per cent of all United Nations Volunteers have been women. Their assignments can range from three

months to two years, depending on the requirements of the field missions they are serving in.

7. The UNV programme involves a wide range of sectors; it maintains a roster of returned Volunteers, many of whom are ready, often on a standby basis, to contribute their services to a second, or sometimes even third or fourth United Nations field operation, containing offers of service from 5,000 men and women from around the world covering some 110 professional categories. United Nations Volunteers work in technical, economic and social fields in four main areas, namely, in technical cooperation with Governments that are short of skills, with community-based initiatives for self-reliance, in humanitarian relief and rehabilitation and in support of human rights and electoral and peace-building processes.

8. With regard to peace operations, United Nations Volunteers have been engaged in many aspects of peacekeeping, peace-building and democratization, from demilitarization and census-taking to the organization of elections and the protection of human rights. A narrative summary highlighting the functions and types of activities United Nations Volunteers have been called upon to participate in is provided in the attached annex.

9. The key contribution of the UNV programme is the ability to quickly mobilize international volunteers with the relevant skills and experience to carry out functions essential to field operations and to support them in the field. The inherent characteristics of the UNV programme extend the value of the collaboration beyond a mere staffing modality, as it serves the cause of peace and development through enhancing opportunities for the participation and involvement of all peoples.

IV. United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping

10. The effectiveness of the United Nations in field operations depends on its capacity to rapidly deploy qualified and experienced civilian personnel to the field to carry out its mandated activities. Challenges to meet field mission personnel requirements have intensified during the past 18 months with the increase in size and complexity of peacekeeping missions, in particular transitional administration functions that have been entrusted to the United Nations in Kosovo and in East Timor.

11. The introduction of nation-building, public administration and governance components in these two recent peacekeeping operations has required the assignment of personnel whose competencies and experience fall well outside the traditional parameters of logistical and technical support provided to military contingents and observers, civilian police and civilian United Nations personnel. Formerly, staff providing substantive support were required to have expertise in such areas as political reconciliation and post-conflict recovery, whereas today's field missions require personnel with expertise ranging from criminal law to public revenue collection and administration, reconstruction of public utilities and public health and education.

12. The use of United Nations Volunteers to perform complex functions in these new missions has enabled the Organization to field qualified personnel in the areas of governance and public administration within a short time frame. As an example, in UNMIK the civil and electoral registration of the population of Kosovo was conducted over the course of six months with the assistance of 500 United Nations Volunteers deployed for this purpose.

13. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has over the past year expanded the inclusion of United Nations Volunteers in its peacekeeping operations, as evidenced by the large number of them fielded to the missions in Kosovo and East Timor. In order to extend this participation further, the Department will create and maintain a roster of candidates, including United Nations Volunteers. The Department will include in this roster details relevant to the candidatures of Volunteers who have previous peacekeeping experience in order to quickly meet new or additional requirements for experienced personnel in the field missions. The recent report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) makes several recommendations with regard to civilian specialists, including the establishment of a central Intranet-based roster and the increased use of United Nations Volunteers. In this connection, the Department aims at intensifying a pre-selection exercise of the occupational groups required for staffing of missions. Furthermore, the Department and UNV headquarters will strive to strengthen their cooperation whereby the UNV roster could be utilized to pre-select and vet

candidates in as many occupational groups as possible for speedy deployment to the field.

V. Administrative and financial considerations

14. The United Nations Volunteers profiles reflect a commitment to the purpose of a field mission, a desire to participate and an ability to share professional knowledge and skills. This is demonstrated through the acceptance of volunteer conditions of service and through the acceptance of and ability to live and work under hardship conditions.

15. At the field level in any given mission that UNV is invited to participate in, a UNV Programme and Administrative Support Unit attached to a mission's administration is established where there are a large number of Volunteers. Such units are responsible for the administrative backstopping involved in the identification, recruitment, deployment, and in-country support provided to Volunteers. This field support structure for the serving Volunteers is a standard feature in the memorandum of understanding signed by the United Nations and the UNV Programme, detailing the terms and conditions for the participation of Volunteers in individual peacekeeping missions.

16. The mission-specific memorandum of understanding also includes the budgetary arrangements for the costs associated with the Volunteers, comprising, in the field, living allowance, hazard pay and mission area travel expenses, and, at UNV headquarters, assignment travel, pre-departure expenses and programme support costs. A rate of programme support of 8 per cent is charged in respect of expenditures incurred for United Nations Volunteers both at UNV headquarters and in the peacekeeping mission. Programme and Administrative Support Units are also financed from peacekeeping mission budgets.

17. Currently the cost of engaging United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping operations is approximately $45,000 per annum per Volunteer, depending on the mission-specific costs, such as travel. It is of paramount importance that Volunteers not be regarded as "cheap labour" as a result of their lower cost to the Organization. As international United Nations Volunteers, they are unsalaried professionals who in return for their services receive a living allowance intended to cover basic needs, including housing and utilities, ranging from $1,000 to $2,700 per month, depending on the country of assignment.

18. While the cost-effectiveness of the UNV modality is an important factor to consider when planning mission-specific staff requirements, this factor is not seen as the defining characteristic of the programme's strengths. Rather, its key strengths lie in the type, quality and commitment of the individuals attracted to serve in its programmes. With an age ranging from 34 to 43 years and with an average of at least 10 years of related work experience, United Nations Volunteers challenge the old volunteer stereotype of well-meaning amateurs lacking the professionalism such serious undertakings require. These individuals are middle-level and upper-middle-level specialists who are motivated to be of service within a programme that reflects the neutrality and objectivity of the United Nations. The UNV programme has been able to attract qualified people who want to volunteer for a period of their professional career to assist the United Nations in its work.

VI. Potential for wider use of United Nations Volunteers in peacekeeping missions

19. As stated above, the key contribution of the UNV programme is its ability to quickly mobilize international volunteers with the relevant skills and experience to carry out functions essential to field operations and to support them in the field. The fact that there are currently some 1,300 United Nations Volunteers serving in field operations around the world in various capacities demonstrates the appreciation on the part of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the valuable contribution the UNV programme makes and the continued need for the inclusion of Volunteers in mission staffing complements wherever feasible.

20. The UNV programme's ongoing and future collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will be influenced by the programme's policy of maintaining an appropriate balance in the provision of substantive support versus technical and administrative support in field operations. The strength and attraction of the UNV programme lies in its ability to provide appropriate candidates in substantive areas